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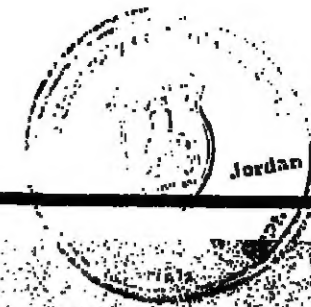
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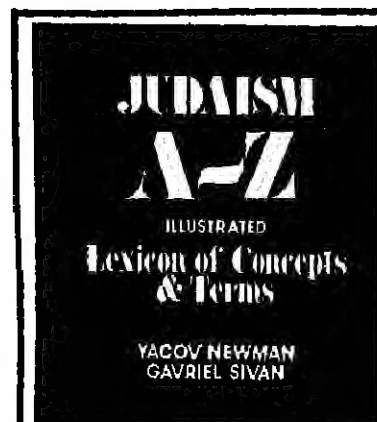
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Wednesday, October 10, 1984

Succot

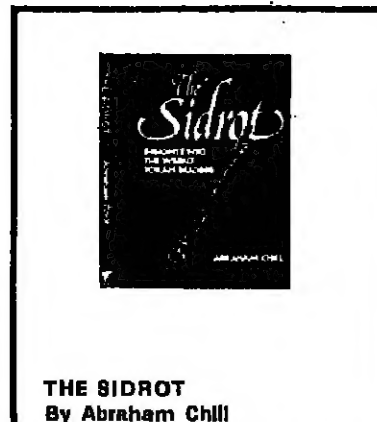


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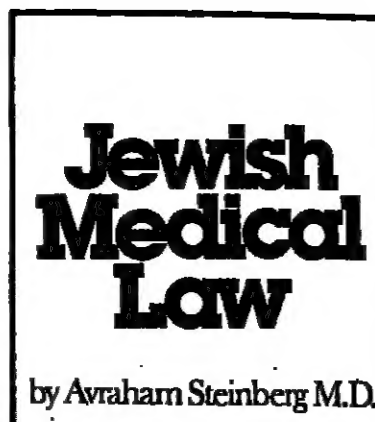
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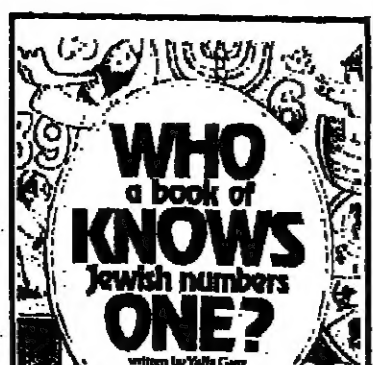
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The lesson of Succot

Moshe Kohn

various occasions. By extension, God also doesn't care whether we eat in a succa or in the house, or what we do with an etrog and the rest.

God, we are taught, gave us these ritual precepts only in order to refine and elevate us. He did so, that is, to get us into the habit of performing acts that will remind us of our mission as the bearers and exemplars of His Torah; to remind us, that is, to observe his commands regarding our treatment of our fellow human beings and our natural environment.

Even the commandment concerning Succot specifies an ethical element (Deuteronomy 16: 13-14): "After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall make the Feast of Succot for

THERE IS a tale about the Hassidic Rabbi Mordechai of Neshkiz (1742-1800), recounted by S.Y. Agnon in his anthology *Yamin Nora'im* (English edition, *Days of Awe*).

Rabbi Mordechai was very poor. Nevertheless, every year he would scrimp and save to buy as beautiful an etrog as possible for the Succot four-species rite. One year, having scraped together what was for him the enormous sum of six rubles, he set out for the market in nearby Brod shortly before Succot to buy an etrog. On the outskirts of Brod, he came upon a Jew sitting in the field weeping. "Brother dear, what's wrong?" the rabbi asked.

The man said he eked out a meagre livelihood delivering water to the townsfolk in a tank carried on a horse-drawn cart. His horse had just dropped dead and he would have to take to begging.

Rabbi Mordechai promptly handed him his six rubles and told him to go buy a horse.

On returning home, the rabbi elatedly exclaimed to his wife: "God be praised, God be praised for providing so beautifully for me this Succot. While all the other Jews are performing the mitzva over an etrog, I'll be doing it over a horse!"

To Rabbi Mordechai that year, giving up his etrog so the water-carrier could have a horse for his livelihood was the supreme implementation of the principle of *hiddur mitzva*, observing a precept in the most elegant manner possible.

It is doubtful that Rabbi Mordechai can be faulted as having violated the admonition (Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 30:1) to spare no money in observing the precepts in general, and the one on the four species in particular. He did the best he could in his circumstances; as he saw it, he did better than he hoped.

Indeed, there are many people who stint on neither time nor money in their search for a perfect four-species set. The way some people shop around for records, clothes, or automobiles, these people may be seen shopping around for the four species, especially in the five days between Yom Kippur and Succot. Turning the lulav (palm branch) this way and that, "aiming" it to see if its spine is perfectly straight, gingerly putting a finger in the tip to see if it pricks or whether it is hopelessly blunt. Examining the etrog (citron) sometimes under a magnifying glass, for unwanted blemishes, for symmetry, for the quality of its yellow-greenness. Closely checking the myrtle sprigs (*hadassim*) to see if the leaves are flawless and in clusters of three from top to bottom. Picking the three sprigs of *hadassim*, and the two willow branches (*aravot*) in a particular state of sprouting and a *koishikel*, the holder made of plaited palm leaves.

Then paying a rather huge sum for the lot — before Rosh Hashana one dealer was already asking \$125 just for an etrog. Then taking the four species home and arranging them in the prescribed "bunch" for use in the Succot rite celebrating our presumed victory over Satan in our Rosh Hashana-Yom Kippur contest with him before the heavenly court.

Similar care is supposed to go into the building of the succa booth — regarding its height, the nature of the walls, the kind and quantity of the foliage used for roofing, the added decorations.

The Talmudic sages tell us a number of times that precepts of this sort are not an end in themselves. It doesn't matter to God, we are taught, what we eat, how we prepare it for eating and how we eat it. Nor, we are told, does God need the light of the candles we ritually kindle on

Let the Jews be bound together in unity, and they will complement each other.

And (Tractate Menahot 27a): Two of the four species — the palm and the etrog trees — yield fruit and two — the myrtle and the willow — do not. The two kinds need each other. And in order for the precept to be fulfilled, they must all be bound together in one bunch. The same applies to the Jewish people.

Indeed, the Talmudic sages tell us in a number of places: If the Jews were at peace with each other and united, even for idolatry, God would not permit our adversaries to prevail against us.

God is not going to annihilate them, so what does He do? He says:

COVER PHOTO by Joel Fishman: Selecting myrtle sprigs at the Four Species market in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim. The Succot supplement was edited by Amy Levinson. Layout by Bernard Beniker.

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THE Bnei Israel of India decorated their palm-and-lamban succot with fruit which was later used for a feast in the synagogue on the evening after Simhat Tora; the Jews of Kurdistan began each day of the holiday with a pre-dawn feast and singing; for the Bratslaver Hassidim, the high point of holiday is the fourth day, the anniversary of the death of their only rebbe, Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav.

For the Bnei Israel, the ancient Jewish community in and around Bombay, the "time of our happiness" began on the evening after Yom Kippur. On that night and the three following it before Succot, explain Nuhil Masil, Ezra Shalom and Solomon Benjamin, three members of the community now living in Jerusalem, it was the custom to dress in white Yom Kippur clothes and visit relatives and friends, including those seen only rarely during the rest of the year.

At the same time, people were busy building succot. Masil, 37, who came to Israel in 1970, says that in his native village of Tula, about half-a-dozen of the 20 families built their own succot in addition to the main one at the synagogue. Bamboo posts were usually used for the frame, and large palm leaves for the sides and roof.

On the day before the holiday began, a large etrog was hung in the synagogue succa, and the *shehechianu* blessing recited. Then the members of the community hung rubber balloons and coconuts, bananas, apples, melons, large cucumbers and other fruit, until the roof was covered. But, according to Masil and Shalom, the fruits had to be ones that would last through the holiday without spoiling and that would not be crushed when pulled down by excited dancers.

Lulavs and etrogs were expensive; most Jews used the ones bought by the synagogue. "It was a non-Jewish country," Masil says in extreme understatement, and only Jews who had their own businesses were able to take off work on intermediate days of the holiday. Prayers and songs for the holiday in the synagogue were in Hebrew; at home Jews also sang holiday songs in Marathi, the local language.

On Simhat Tora, the wooden doors of the ark were left open throughout the day. In their place was hung a curtain made for the occasion of small rose, jasmine and other fragrant and "very expensive" blossoms threaded together.

In Masil's village, the *hakafot* - the procession and dancing around the synagogue with the Tora scrolls - took place late on Simhat Tora, after *mincha* services, and were interrupted for the evening service marking the end of the holiday.

Following the seventh *hakafa*, the large etrog in the synagogue succa was auctioned off. The etrog fetched a high price for the synagogue, since it brought good luck: "Someone who had gotten married that year would get a son, a bachelor would get married; for someone without children, it would bring children."

The holiday dancing did not end with the auction, but moved outside to the succa. As the dancing went on, the lucky man who had bid the highest got on another man's shoulders and pulled down the etrog. This was the signal for the young men to leap up, grab the other fruit, pull them down and bring them into the synagogue, where the dancing continued until the fruit were cut open and the congregation feasted on the succa decorations.

In Tula, Masil remembers, the festivities at the synagogue ended at 10 or 11 at night, but then the young men danced through the streets in a



Bratslaver's during simhat beit hasho'eva dancing.

(Joel Fishman)

'Time of our happiness'

Kurdish Jews, Bratslaver Hassidim and the Bnei Israel of India celebrate Succot with unique rituals, reports Gershom Gorenberg.

Kurdish succa.

(Israel Museum)



line, arms on each other's shoulders, to the homes of those families who had built their own succot, where they would again harvest the ripe fruit from the succa roof, down drinks served them by the family and dance on to the next home. When all the succot had been picked clean, the festival ended.

"HE WHO has not seen joy like that, has not seen joy," says Zion Alfia, whose father was a rabbi in the northern Iraqi city of Zakho, describing the Kurdish Jews' pre-dawn celebrations which took place every day of Succot except Shabbat.

Preparations began the night before, during evening services, when the privilege of taking home the synagogue's lulav and etrog was auctioned off. The congregants then went home, where most had built a succa in the courtyard, invited the traditional "guests" Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David - to come to the succa, ate, sang and studied the Talmudic tractate *Succa*.

Men normally slept in the succa, Alfia says, since this was considered to be "a means of achieving a long life and of purifying the soul." But, he adds, "In the Diaspora we believed very much in demons and spirits. To scare them so they wouldn't attack a man in the succa, a knife or scissors were put under the pillow."

Two hours before dawn, the synagogue attendant came to each house, called the name of the man who lived there, and said: "Get up for the *mitzva* of lulav and etrog." Everyone then went to the home of the man who had bought the lulav and etrog the night before, where the host would serve, tea, coffee, arak - "to wake the soul" - cake, and pickled vegetables.

The guests ate and sang holiday songs until first light, the time for morning prayers, when all the men and women walked in a procession to the synagogue, led by the host with the synagogue's lulav and etrog. "Everyone threw candies at him as if they were leading a groom to his bride canopy," Alfia says.

After Hoshana Raba, the last day of Succot, the willow branches used in that day's services were saved to be burned in the spring when matzot were baked for Pessah. The etrog was also saved and kept in a clothes closet, both to give a good scent to the clothing and to keep moths away. But the etrog had another important use. "If a man stuttered, they would cut a bit of the etrog rind and put it under his tongue as a remedy," Alfia explains.

On the morning of Simhat Tora, before the Tora reading, a kid-dush was held in the synagogue with wine, arak and pickled vegetables. At the same time, an auction was held for the privilege of being one of the "grooms" who would be called to the Tora for the reading of Deuteronomy 33:27-29, of the last two chapters of the Tora and of the beginning of Genesis. "The drinking, he notes, 'raised the prices.'"

But those who bid for the special readings had to make special advance preparations since, he explains, "the real celebration was at the homes." After the services, the entire congregation proceeded in turn to the home of each groom, where a feast would be set out in the courtyard, including the traditional *kajja*, *eyya* and *sijuka* - cow stomach and intestines stuffed with rice and meat - and more arak. "It's a shame that today there's no celebration like that," Alfia says, painting an idyllic picture of the past. "There was no cooking gas or income tax; everything went for food."

RABBI Nahman of Bratslav, famed as the hassidic leader whose followers never chose another rebbe to replace him, died in 1811 on the fourth day of Succot.

Ever since, the *yarzeit*, the anniversary of the death, has been "The New Year of Bratslaver Hassidim. We look forward to this day, and everyone does a soul-searching to reckon what I have done all year as a Bratslaver hassid," explains Nahman Borstein.

Borstein, 50, a small man with a constant smile that fits the Bratslaver emphasis on joy in all circumstances, spent his childhood in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. After the Jordanian conquest in 1948, the Bratslaver community in the Old City moved to the capital's Katamon neighbourhood, where Borstein has lived since.

Explaining the celebration of a *yarzeit* as a holiday, Borstein says, "On this day our rebbe has the power to rise up and do many things for our sake." This, he says, is based on a statement in the *Zohar* (the central work of Jewish mysticism) that "righteous men who have died have more power after their death than in their lives. They are more present in this world after their deaths, because they are freed of their bodies, and can do more through their spirits."

On the afternoon of the fourth day of Succot, the Bratslaver hassidim gather in their synagogues. After the afternoon service, they sit in the succa for a festive meal, during which an elderly member of the community tells the story of Rabbi Nahman's last hours as recorded by his chief disciple.

The meal lasts for three or four hours. The hassidim elsewhere in the city then go to the central Bratslaver synagogue in Mea Shearim, where *simhat beit hasho'eva*, the nightly Succot celebration, is marked with particular fervor, the hassidim dancing late into the night.

The *yarzeit*, Borstein emphasizes, does not overshadow the rest of the holiday. A Bratslaver Hassid, he says, will not buy or build a house without first making sure there is a place set aside for a succa; in the Diaspora, some built a permanent frame for the succa before building the house itself. During the holiday "we practically don't leave the succa. We study there, eat there. Anything which can be done in the succa, we won't do anywhere else." Rabbi Nahman, he explains, put particular emphasis on dwelling in the succa "since it is a *mitzva* that is performed with the entire body."

Borstein adds that "We are very strict about sleeping in the succa." This, too, is based on a doctrine of Rabbi Nahman, which says that there are two types of dreams, those brought to a person by angels and those brought by demons. The word "succa" is numerically equivalent in *gematria* to the Hebrew word for "angel," so the sleep and dreams of the succa come from an angel.

The Bratslavers, Borstein says, customarily "lavish our money on buying an etrog, because no one knows the true value of this *mitzva*." The etrog is saved for the entire year, since "the rebbe said that anyone whose eyes hurt should look at an etrog, and it will be a remedy."

Some hassidim, he adds, also save the myrtle branches used with the lulav during succot to serve as spices for *havdala*. "Since they've served for one *mitzva*, another *mitzva* is also performed with them," he explains. And to preserve the delicate myrtle leaves, a pouch is woven for them out of the leaves of the lulav itself, keeping one more symbol of the "time of our happiness" for the entire year.

Mixed species

Greer Fay Cashman meets an unusual couple.

THE IDEA of the binding together of the four species which characterizes Succot - the palm, which has taste but no fragrance; the myrtle, which has fragrance but no taste; the willow, which has neither taste nor fragrance; and the citron, which has both taste and fragrance - is an allusion to the different types of people which make up this country's population. The bringing together of the different species, representative in number of the size of an average family, is symbolic of peace and harmony.

The mixed species syndrome is the unavoidable hallmark of any country which encourages immigration - though the syndrome may sometimes manifest itself beyond the boundaries of that country. Thus, even in countries whose societies have been closed to outsiders for centuries, we are witnessing the evolution of the poly-cultural family.

Izaya and Rika Noda, aged 12 and eight respectively, are examples of a relatively rare strain. Their father Tetsuya was born in Shiranui, a Japanese township not far from the Korean border.

Dorit (Barur) Noda, their mother, was born on Kibbutz Galed. Izaya and Rika's religious ancestry is Buddhist on their father's side and Jewish on their mother's.

The family lives in Tokyo, where Tetsuya is associate professor in the faculty of art at the National University of Fine Art and Music.

The Noda family has not experienced racial prejudice in either Japan or Israel, but in order to marry Dorit in a Jewish ceremony, Tetsuya had to convert to Judaism. The conversion ceremony took place in Japan.

There is a family joke that it was an arranged match. While Dorit's father was Israel's ambassador to Japan, her sister Michal was studying ceramics at Japan's National University of Fine Art and Music and became friendly with Tetsuya. He was so immersed in his studies that he set aside little time for socialising, and it occurred to him that opportunities for marriage were passing him by.

Dorit was still in Israel at the time, completing her military service. When Dorit arrived in Japan, early in 1967, Michal introduced her to Tetsuya, after which nature took its course.

But four years passed before the couple was married. Dorit, who had never imagined living permanently outside Israel, returned home. Tetsuya followed. He found employment in a well-known Jerusalem print workshop, but was constantly frustrated. His ideas on technique and presentation were dismissed as worthless, while his employers tried to foist on him ideas which were alien to his way of thinking.

Dorit found it easier to adapt to Japan. Before her marriage, she had learned to speak Japanese. Perhaps more important, she had met Tetsuya on his territory and not on hers, and knew instinctively that the burden of adjustment would eventually fall on her. As it is, Dorit believes that women adjust better than men to "another culture and another society."

Over the years, Tetsuya has picked up some Hebrew and Yiddish phraseology which he uses humorously to help change or avoid a subject or to create a lighter mood. Instead of conforming to the stereotyped image of the inscrutable

Oriental, he uses laughter as a mask behind which to hide his thoughts and feelings.

Whereas Dorit may supply any number of logical reasons for living in Japan instead of Israel, Tetsuya is nimbly evasive and quips, by "living in Japan, we can always celebrate Passover next year in Jerusalem."

For Dorit, the most difficult aspect of living in Japan is the geographic distance from her own culture and homeland. The expense of travelling between the two countries is formidable, so she does not come home as often as she would like.

It is not always easy for the high-spirited ex-kibbutznik to fit in with the formality of Japanese society. Similarly, when the family is on the roads, he is convinced that much of the dangerous driving which one sees here stems from lack of formality and discipline. He can't get used to the way that drivers shout at each other at the slightest provocation. "In Japan we never shout at other drivers," he said when he was here in mid-summer.

Dorit has a somewhat different view on matters of formality and discipline. "Israelis let it all out, and the Japanese keep it all inside - so if it does come out, it's very frightening."

The Noda household is bi-cultural, but not in speech. Although some Japanese people have learned to speak other languages, contact with anything foreign, according to Dorit, is a traumatic experience for them. Centuries of isolation from the rest of the world, she explains, have created cultural inhibitions which outsiders from the West simply cannot comprehend.

She has friends who have wanted to study English and who have asked her to teach them - but the difficulties are enormous. "Foreigners can't even begin to imagine the inhibitions which the Japanese have in trying to speak another language."

Explicitly, the Japanese are more amenable to new foods than a new language and are eager to try humous, any variety of eggplant salads and other Israeli delicacies. But these appear on the Noda table only when there are visitors. The rest of the time, the cuisine is Japanese. "Tetsuya is a good cook," says Dorit fondly. "He taught me everything I know about Japanese cooking."

"She's trying to be a good *balebus*," chimes in Tetsuya.

More and more married women - Dorit among them - go out to work in Japan. Dorit has taught many courses to people working in the Israel section of Japan's Foreign Ministry, and has taught Hebrew to Japanese diplomats posted to Israel. She has also taught Hebrew in the Sunday school of the Jewish Community Centre, and whenever there are Israeli exhibitions in Japan she translates the catalogues and brochures into Japanese.

One of her more exciting experiences was to come home with a Japanese television crew to film an introduction to the Israel TV series based on the film *The Yellow Poppy*. Presented in Japan as *Growing Up*, the series is now showing for the sixth consecutive season and has one of the highest ratings in Japan.

Although the Japanese are basically not anti-Israel, their views of this country are often distorted by biased reporting in the media.

"Everyone knows that Tetsuya is married to an Israeli," says Dorit, "and sometimes he has the feeling that he is Israel's defence minister." Tetsuya's toughest "diplomatic" assignment was after the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla. "I knew the facts," he recalls. "I had the Israeli point of view. But most Japanese received another version of the story."

Currently, Izaya and Rika are more Japanese than they are Israeli. Dorit does not think that they will ever be forced to make a choice of allegiance between one country or the other. "Somehow I think that when the children grow up," she says, "borders between countries will change. They won't be as people delineated them 50 years ago - and distances will also be shorter."

"A hundred years ago, people didn't intermarry to the extent that they do now. Everything is different."



The Noda family during a visit to Jerusalem.

(Dan Landau)

I just hope that my children will be comfortable in both countries because we have so much to learn from each other."

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Mrs. Sarah Elia says: It's quiet and nice here. I used to have attacks of fear, but that's all gone here. I sleep peacefully and feel wonderful. There's a feeling of security. Not to mention the nurse round the clock. And every convenience.



Mr. Yacov Weiss says: I have companions. Shabbat synagogue services, we've got wonderful people here who worry about us. Not like other senior residents' homes, with their common meals I feel like it. I cook up something for myself.



Mrs. Rosa Naimansohn says: At our age, it's just no good wherever we are. But here I have no complaints - I feel just fine. I rest, have a nurse to care for me. And then there's the club, the activities, the company. I just like being here.

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No place like home

Betti Lipman compares the trials and tribulations of succa-making in the Diaspora with festival celebrations here.

ONLY THOSE who have lived in the Diaspora can truly appreciate the preparation and celebration of Jewish festivals in Israel, and on no holiday is the contrast more marked than on Succot.

In all countries outside of Israel - even the most liberal and democratic - observance of Shabbat and Jewish holidays poses special problems that mar the joy and satisfaction of maintaining our traditions. We are sensitive to non-Jewish reaction, afraid to arouse anti-Semitism, uncomfortable about taking time off from school or work and desperately self-conscious as we stroll to synagogue in our festive finery, amid rush-hour crowds.

On Succot, that problem is aggravated when the menfolk, carrying the fragile lulav and etrog, have to wend their way through throngs of shoppers who pause to gape, as though Burnham Wood, alive with lions, had appeared in their midst. For those who live abroad in individual houses with a garden, entering the succa presents no problem beyond that imposed by autumn rains. Since, hilariously, the succa roof must be open to the sky and stars, it is not unlikely that the meal will be cooled and watered down by a torrent of rain, perhaps with colour additive dripping from washed-out paper chains hanging overhead.

Residents of apartment buildings - where succa facilities are obviously not provided - are compelled to brave the elements, as they carry bags and pots of food through the

streets, to a communal synagogue succa or to that of friends or neighbours. There, the hosts feel obliged to rush their meal while the visitors wait, embarrassed at having intruded, until they can sit down to cold, congealed soup and chilled chicken.

Here in Israel, Succot is so different, so exciting and so vibrant. Before the holiday, stalls appear everywhere, spread with the four species, gaily coloured decorations, sprigs of dates and pomegranates for hanging in the succa. Crowds jostle, unashamedly fingering, peering and smelling, as they select their lulav and etrog, and everywhere there is the resounding echo of hammers banging, as the succot spring up like mushrooms after rain.

Municipality cars distribute succa thatch at points around the city, and people can be seen dragging the huge palm fronds through the streets. Many apartment buildings, specially constructed to accommodate succot, with balconies extending in alternate directions to prevent overhead obstruction, enable each the opportunity to erect a succa, easily accessible from the apartment. Here they can enjoy freshly heated meals, lingering at leisure in their own family circle or with as many guests as they wish to invite.

The clatter of cutlery and crockery, the bubble of conversation from dozens of succot clustered together, interrupted by a burst of holiday songs often taken up by everyone in surrounding succot, creates a won-

derfully heartening and truly festive atmosphere. It is all so spontaneous and sincere, unlike the furtive awkwardness involved in celebrating Succot outside of Israel.

For tourists and holidaymakers, succot are available in all public places; in hotels, synagogues, restaurants, parks and, of course, at the Western Wall, so that one may go on outings during the intermediate days without worrying about a succa in which to picnic. In fact, many tour organizers even provide a mobile succa on their excursions.

Celebrating two holy days at either end of the festival, as those living in the Diaspora must do, is particularly difficult when, as this year, the second day is followed by Shabbat, making three consecutive days of prayer alternating with heavy meals that have to be prepared in advance. In the case of Shemini Atzeret-Simhat Tora, however, this is a distinct - probably the sole - advantage over the combined service that Israel's one-day festival dictates. It is disturbing, even incongruous, to switch abruptly from the singing, dancing and merry-making that mark Simhat Tora, to yizkor (memorial prayer for the deceased) and the solemn prayer for rain, and then to revert to the Simhat Tora revelry and refreshments. The two-day festival, as it is observed outside of Israel, allows a day for the sad and solemn prayer, followed by one of joy and festivity.

To compensate, Israelis extend the celebrations well into the night, beyond the official termination of Simhat Tora, holding a second round of *hakafot* in public centres and settlements. Visitors from every corner of the country attend, licking freshly-made ices that have not had



Local succa-making: A breeze.

time to set or munching hot Hanuka doughnuts that traditionally make their debut that night. No need to rush home and dismantle their succot for fear of rain. Tomorrow is *Isru Hag*, another day of glorious sunshine and public holiday.

from Mahane Yehuda into Mea Shearim. My children and I make the grand tour each year just to capture the flavour and fervour of the sellers and the buyers.



Memories of bouquets past

David Geffen

THE SUCCOT bouquet - as some label it - of the lulav and etrog, myrtle and willow branches, represents one of the aspects of our tradition known as *hiddur mitzva* - beautifying a commandment. We are encouraged not just to perform the mitzva of the four species, which is spelled out in Leviticus 23:39-44, but to find the most beautiful lulav and etrog we can afford and thereby amplify the joy of the commandment through its aesthetic enhancement.

Moreover, the use of an Israeli etrog makes possible a three-fold linkage - historical, agricultural and spiritual - to tradition.

In ancient times, the etrog was one of the best known of the citrus fruits grown in the land of Israel. Depictions of etrogim are found on ancient coins and pottery. Thus the modern use of the Israeli etrog worldwide is a reminder of the antiquity of this beautiful fruit of the holy land.

But, it is only within this century that cultivation of the etrog in Palestine became agriculturally viable. During the Middle Ages, etrogim from the Isle of Corfu came into use and continued to supply the Jewish world into this century. In the early 1900s, Rav Kook ruled that only Palestine etrogim were fit for ritual use on Succot. His halachic stand, stemming from his love of the land and its pioneers, provided a boost to the citrus farming of the country. Today, hundreds of thousands of Israeli etrogim are sold annually.

As a Jew born in the U.S. and now settled in Israel, I have a special feeling for two places where elements of the Succot bouquet are sold. One is on the East side in downtown New York, where stores of all types become Succot speciality shops during the few weeks before the festival. The other is in Jerusalem, where markets, each more colourful than the other, stretch

from Mahane Yehuda into Mea Shearim. My children and I make the grand tour each year just to capture the flavour and fervour of the sellers and the buyers.

My love for the four species derives in the first place from my childhood experiences in the home of my grandfather, the late Rabbi Tobias Geffen.

In Atlanta, Georgia, our hometown, the annual acquisition of the lulav and etrog was much more difficult than just picking out a set in the open marketplace. My grandfather, from his arrival in the city in 1910, felt it his responsibility to get the Succot species not only for himself but also for Jews throughout the south. Delays in the species' arrival in Atlanta gave rise to innovative methods of getting the lulav and etrog to their final destination on time.

As a young lad, my father had to take the Succot set to the railroad station on the eve of Succot. He waited until the train arrived and then gave the precious cargo to the engineer, who personally kept watch over it in the engine of his Southern Railway train. On arrival at his destination he delivered it to his next-door neighbour, an observant Jew in a small Georgia town.

My most poignant memories are of my grandfather as he prepared the lulavim. He would inspect each lulav, checking the spine and the point very closely. Then he stripped off a few of the long lulav leaves and intricately wove holder after holder for the myrtle and willow branches. With an exactness of which only he was capable, he fashioned holders for all the lulavim and then an extra one for me to play with. Then he meticulously put together the entire set, and once again checked the etrogim to make sure the *pitom* was still intact. The sets were now ready to be sent and were quickly dispatched by mail to communities throughout the South.

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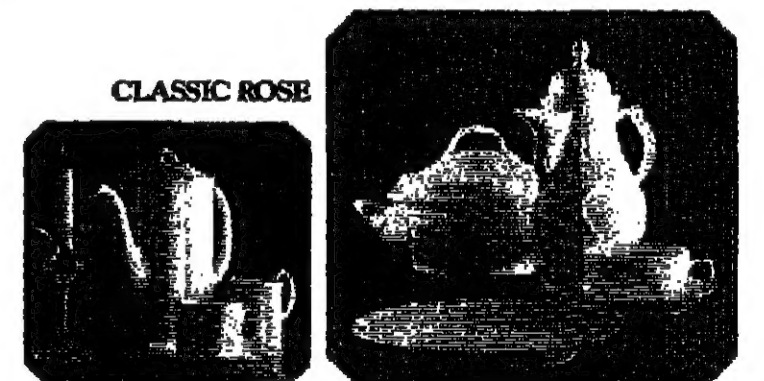
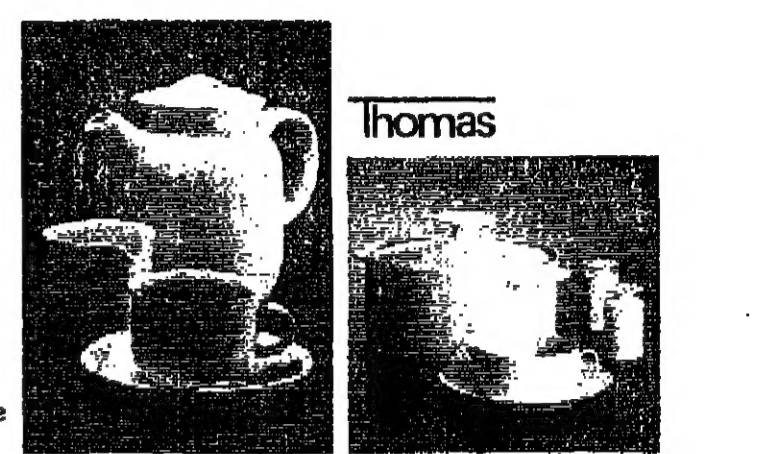
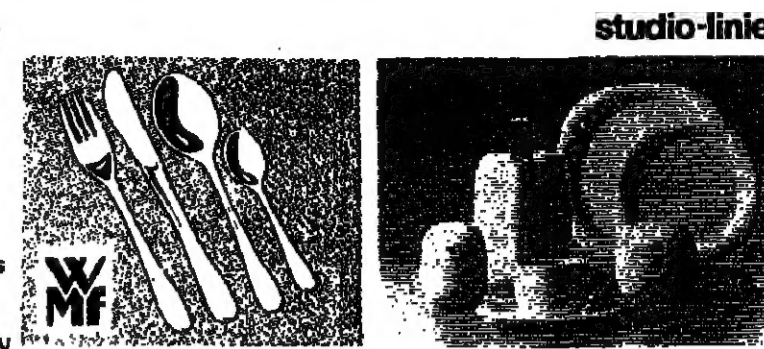
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From tree to market

Photographer Joel Fishman visited Kfar Habad where he saw Lubavitcher hassidim tending etrogim on trees (top left). He watched as workers inspected the fruit for imperfections (below left), removing spots with a toothpick, and as they carefully wrapped them for transport (above). The etrogim were then seen (below) fetching high prices on the streets of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem.



A special celebration

Leah Abramowitz

"AT THE end of the *shmita* (sabbatical year when fields lie fallow) in 1945," relates Rabbi Moshe Segal, "we decided to recall the ancient *hakheil* ceremony." *Hakheil*, almost the last mitzva mentioned in the Tora, was always observed on Succot. It was a mass gathering of Jews of all ages, from every walk of life, to hear a public recitation of the Law read aloud. No such assembly had been held since biblical times.

Rabbi Segal, Dr. S.Z. Kahana and Rabbi Yisraeli, all religious and political leaders during the British mandatory period, contacted all the important rabbis of their generation to check if there was any objection. The general opinion was encouraging.

Rabbi Segal first invited all the youth groups to gather in the courtyard of the Sephardi orphanage on Jaffa Road, since this was one of the largest yards in Jerusalem.

Several hundred young people gathered that Succot day. They heard a number of inspiring speeches and then marched in a spontaneous parade, down the main street of the New City to Jaffa Gate, and then on to the succa of the Old City's chief rabbi, Rabbi Kahana. Rabbi Kahana, a noted scholar, had left his prestigious office as chief rabbi of Warsaw in 1940 to live near the Western Wall.

"The succa was very large, long and narrow, but certainly not big enough to hold all the people who gathered for *hakheil* that year," Rabbi Segal says. "People came in, greeted the rabbi, had a piece of fruit or cake, made a blessing and left. There was a steady stream of humanity flowing through that succa."

Dr. Kahana remembers that the mass procession continued to the Hurva synagogue, where verses from the Bible and the Talmud were read. Kohanim blew the shofar and many honoured guests from Israel and from abroad participated. "We made certain not to actually hold the *hakheil* service; that is possible only when the Temple is rebuilt and the Jewish sovereignty re-established," he explains. Nevertheless, the goal of reminding the nation of the beautiful custom was amply achieved.

By the time another *shmita* year had been completed (1952), the State of Israel was a reality, but the Old City of Jerusalem was no longer accessible. Rabbi Segal recalls that another attempt was made to commemorate the *hakheil* ceremony and the gathering took place in a most incongruous location - at the football field in Katamon.

Then for years the ceremony receded into oblivion. After the Six Day War the first opportunity to reinstate the *hakheil* custom fell during the sombre days of the Yom Kippur War.

Only in 1980, at the end of another *shmita* cycle, during the intermediary days of Tabernacles, as mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy 31: 12-13, a full and moving service was held at the wall, in the presence of rabbis and important guests. The shofar was blown, pertinent biblical verses were read, and only the parade by members of every youth movement and the reception in the late Rabbi Kahana's succa of unlimited space were missing.

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IT IS common knowledge that Israel has more antiquities per square inch than most countries have per square mile. It is also true that Israel is more interesting than most countries for the curious traveller, because the sites are by and large marked and may easily be found.

There is enough information available to make intelligible whatever it is you are looking at. This is either in books, of which there are plenty - although of uneven quality - or in signs, instructions and explanations at the site.

So, with a bit of effort and a few good books you can "do" Israel properly.

The National Parks Authority deserves a lot of credit for this situation. Although plagued by a limited budget, and sometimes slow to act or react, the Authority has prepared and maintained a few dozen of the most important places in the country. It has laid out roads and paths, erected explanatory signs and diagrams, printed site maps and pamphlets, kept the sites landscaped, clean and tidy, and lit where necessary.

They have sometimes reconstructed enough to let you feel what the place must once have felt like, ensured safe and adequate parking, a constant supply of water and clean toilets.

All this makes life bearable for thousands of tourists, and Israelis, who visit the National Parks every week.

Jerusalem is blessed with an active and intelligent municipality and through its various agencies, it has prepared and preserved dozens of wonderful archaeological places in the city.

There is the Citadel, the Burnt House, Damascus Gate, the Israeli Tower, the Naa, the Cardo, The Broad Wall, the Hurva and much more. They're there to see and understand and enjoy. You have to go elsewhere, like Egypt or Greece, to see what good shape we're in.

Having said this, what about the exceptions - those places which are inaccessible or closed entirely, places available only to the faithful, or to *protestants*, or not available at all.

In the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, on Suk Khan el-Zait, just at the foot of the steps going up to the roof of the Holy Sepulchre, is Zalutino's Sweet Shop.

In the back of the shop, in Zalutino's warehouse are no more or less than four original steps, the original doorway and a piece of the original facade of Constantine's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, dedicated between the 13th and 20th of September, 335 CE.

If you want a picture of the place, look at the famous Madaba map, from the sixth century. There are the steps and there is the door.

But Mr. Zalutino got fed up with people walking through his shop, despite the fact that we always left some money on the table when we left there, so he erected a dirty black wall right in the middle of the great doorway.

A rare and precious bit of ancient Jerusalem suddenly became walled off, or very nearly so, although you can still get there, and peek through a hole in the cinder block. If it's really urgent you can look into that storeroom from the top, through a window at ground level half way up the stairs to the Holy Sepulchre roof. But as far as accessibility, Zalutino has denied it.

Have we complaints against him? I certainly do. But I don't think I have a case. The shop is, after all, private property. Are there limits with what a man may do with his private property? Apparently not.

Off the beaten track

Walter Zanger suggests some special places to visit in Jerusalem during the holiday.



Holy Sepulchre: More than meets the eye.

(David Rubinger)

The district archaeologist has known about the situation for more than a year, is unhappy about it, but unable to force Zalutino to dismantle that black wall.

Perhaps the authorities are unwilling to press the matter, for fear that the situation may become worse. Zalutino can close the place entirely. If there are no legal limitations on the closing of ancient sites, there certainly should be, and if there are they should be enforced.

The situation becomes more complicated when we are dealing with church property. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself there are wonderful excavations, deep down below the foundations of the building.

Climbing the cat-walk through there is enough to make you dizzy. It is impossible to describe how deep was the stone quarry in which the church was built (the dry fact, 13 metres, doesn't do justice to the actual size) or how massive were the foundations Constantine had to raise to support his Church (some construction here is even Hadrianic!), without seeing these huge walls.

An additional discovery makes the place very moving: a pilgrim was here early in the Byzantine era and he drew a picture of his host (with a lowered mast - very rare!) on the wall.

Beneath he wrote a simple inscription: DOMINE IVIMUS ("Lord, we have gone").

Is this a fulfilment of the verse from Psalms: "I rejoiced when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord?" Perhaps. I often wish I could take pilgrims there; they would be moved as I have been. But I usually can't.

The excavations are below the Armenian chapel, one level down into the stone quarry at the back of the church. The door to them is locked, and the key is with the Armenians. And unless you are Armenian, or sufficiently important to rate VIP treatment, you don't get in.

What shall we do then when the religious property in question is Arab? (Careful here, Walter, you can start a riot.) The Arabs lost the Six Day War of 1967. And for them, but true.

The result was that for the first time in 700 years Jews and Christians could go freely up on to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Having no

choice, the Moslem authorities agreed to that. But only in part. The southeast corner of the Temple platform rises some 25 metres above the ground below, and is a likely spot for the Pinnacle, the corner which figures in the Temptation of Jesus and the martyrdom of St. James.

You used to be able to get to that corner, but now guards chase you away if you go anywhere near it. Below the corner is a series of Crusader vaults forming a great hall, called Solomon's Stables. It's a huge room, held up by 88 square pillars. You used to be able to get there too; now you can't.

The Golden Gate has been out of bounds for years - for reasons nobody ever bothered to explain. The guards shout at you if you make the least attempt to approach.

Not only do the police support the Moslem Waqf in this (and all other) matters, but the Border Police are stationed now on top of the Golden Gate, and even if you managed to avoid the guard, the Border Police won't let you get anywhere near it.

That is all a great pity. The Golden Gate is exquisite. It is also the oldest gate (by 1,000 years) into the Old City and the oldest structure of any kind on the Temple Mount, apart from the platform itself.

It is extraordinarily holy to Christians. Every time Jesus came from the Mount of Olives to the Temple he came through that gate, for it is the only gate to the platform from the east. Moreover, tradition identifies it with the Beautiful Gate (of Acts 3:2).

The Emperor Heraclius staged an extraordinary procession through that gate, as he returned the True Cross from Persian captivity in 629 CE. But don't go near the Golden Gate - you're asking for a lot of trouble.

Consider the Hulda Gates. They are just underneath Al-Aksa. You can see the sealed-up gateway (half of it) from the outside of the city wall, just underneath the silver dome. There is a staircase down next to the main entrance of the mosque - a locked door. The door has been locked for as long as I can remember. Yet the gate seems, at least in part, to be contemporary with the platform; that is, Herodian! I've never been in there, so I can't tell you what it feels like. The pictures are beautiful. The gate is inaccessible.

The tourist or pilgrim who just happens to be at the wall on those days and during those times of the day when the area is open for women - men can get in under Wilson's arch at any hour - from 8.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 11.30, maybe 12 noon, to 3 p.m. on Monday and Thursday, from 8.30 till noon (or is it 1 p.m.) on Fridays, and closed Saturdays and holidays, including Rosh Hodesh (or something like that) - gets to see the excavations.

Everybody else who's there on the remaining 350 days of the year, or at the wrong time of the wrong day - in fact, the other 99 per cent of the visiting population of Jerusalem - is simply out of luck. And there's nothing to be done about it.

Nothing, that is, unless you happen to have friends in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, or can make yourself make friends. A telephone call here and there will usually open doors. The odd bottle of whiskey doesn't hurt either. Sometimes you can stand at the big gate at the back of Wilson's arch and shout for Haim (or is it Moshe?) and smile a lot and tell him Avraham (or is it Yehuda?) sent you, and what with one thing and another he'll let you in.

There is more to write about the Temple Mount, but the point is made. Despite everything that happened before 1967, the government of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality have been extraordinarily sensitive to the feelings of the Arab community.

It's hard to think of a comparable example of communal generosity after a war. And I believe that this is a good thing. But there are limits and the closing of precious places is beyond acceptable limits, in my opinion.

Have we done with Zalutino, the Armenians, and the Moslem Waqf? Time for the Jews. Do you know anything about the Western Wall? It is a retaining wall Herod constructed to hold up the Temple platform. That wall is 485 metres long. Of its 485 metres, 60 are now in use as an open-air prayer place for the Jews.

Another 60-70 metres are to the south, past the ramp going up to the Mugrabi Gate. Add the width of the ramp itself, perhaps 10 metres, and another 30 metres to the north, underneath the Mahkameh buildings and Wilson's arch.

Making any calculation we like, we can account for not more than 200 metres of Herod's wall. Where is the rest? Behind locked gates, that's where, and you have to have some real heavy *protektzia* to find it.

For the past 10 years the Ministry of Religious Affairs has been excavating the northern section of the wall. They have dug a tunnel-like something looking like a coal mine as far as the northern corner, site of the Antonia fortress.

They have also excavated down to the bottom of the Tyropean Valley. There are great rooms and halls down there, Hasmonean or Herodian, which are very impressive. Warren's Gate is in the tunnel, discovered in the last century. It was the furthest north of the four gates on to the platform from the west. It is some 10 metres north of the closed gate.

But most astonishing are two stones in there. As Jimmy Durante used to say: "You ain't seen nuthin' yet." There is one stone of the wall which is 11 metres long, 2.8 metres high and 3.5 metres deep. It weighs something like 350 tons.

The second one is even bigger: 14 metres long - the other dimensions are the same - and its weight has been estimated at between 415 and 420 tons!

There are larger cut stones in the world - not many, perhaps, but the obelisk at Karnak is one. When we consider that the largest stone in the Pyramids weighs 10 (some say 15) tons and the largest stone of Stonehenge weighs 40 tons, it is clear that we are in the presence of some kind of engineering marvel. How on earth did Herod move these monsters into place?

At least in Karnak they could float the obelisk down the Nile. They had to drag it only a few hundred metres from the water, then put it on a free-standing base, not fit it high into an enormous wall. How indeed does one do such things in Jerusalem? Herod left us a bit of work here without parallel in the entire world. No more or less than that.

The extraordinary excavations are open to the public on the intermediate days of Passover, Succot, and Hanukkah - that is for a few days consecutively three times a year. Only a part of the tunnel is then available. Forget about the halls down at the bottom. In any case they are not ready to be seen - you can look into them through a hole on top; on the way to Wilson's arch through the tunnels under the Mahkameh.

The tourist or pilgrim who just happens to be at the wall on those days and during those times of the day when the area is open for women - men can get in under Wilson's arch at any hour - from 8.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 11.30, maybe 12 noon, to 3 p.m. on Monday and Thursday, from 8.30 till noon (or is it 1 p.m.) on Fridays, and closed Saturdays and holidays, including Rosh Hodesh (or something like that) - gets to see the excavations.

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Clearly the Ministry of Religious Affairs has a grip on what it considers its territory, and will not be moved into making concessions to the rest of the world, certainly not in the present political situation.

The last time I asked the keeper of the keys to let me in, Shamir had just resigned as prime minister and called new elections. The answer was that there's no government, so nobody is in charge, so I can't go in.

People of little power will exercise what little they have in a most rigorous way, just to prove how much power they still have - and there is no difference here between the Ministry of Religious Affairs down at the wall or the Waqf up on the platform.

It doesn't matter that I cannot find one single reference to the Western Wall in the whole of Talmudic literature, not in Rashi, Ibn Ezra or the Rambam, the Ramban, Estori Parshani nor in anybody else who had ever been in Jerusalem before the 15th century.

In fact, with the exception of one quote from Benjamin of Tudela, in the 1170s, I never found any indication that the wall was special to the Jews at all before the rule of the Ottoman Turks in the 16th century.

What little material there is in the Talmudic sources refers to an actual piece of the Temple, up by the Golden Dome of today, and not to the Herodian retaining wall outside. In my opinion, so does the quote from Benjamin of Tudela.

Yet history is for academics. The fact is that the Ministry of Religious Affairs has got the wall, closed the excavations north of it, and regulated the rest beyond human understanding.

Not even the government of Israel can do anything about it, although I know it tried.

Sad, perhaps, but true. We can only be thankful for what we have and wait for better days. Meanwhile, we have to live with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as we have to live with Zalutino, the Armenians, and the Waqf. Who said life has to be easy?

THE GIANT crescent of Islam shines brightly over the golden Dome of the Rock while the silver cupola of the Aksa Mosque gleams dully on the Jerusalem skyline. It is now over nine centuries since the soldiers of Titus put the torch to the great Temple and drove the Jews from Jerusalem. On Mount Moriah the twin sanctuaries of Islam stand where Solomon built his proud Temple 30 centuries earlier.

To the east, beyond the Kidron Valley, a gaudy throng, singing and dancing, is making its way slowly up the Mount of Olives, among the ruins of the great Byzantine churches destroyed during the Persian invasion of 614. The crowd is ascending toward the summit, the place where so long ago David, fleeing his son Absalom, stopped to kneel and worship the Lord.

This is the traditional procession of Hoshana Raba, the seventh and last day of the Succot festival. Pilgrims from all over the country and the medieval world are here for this, the greatest event of the Jewish calendar.

Between the destruction of the Second Temple and the arrival of the Crusaders in Jerusalem more than a thousand years elapsed. During these 10 centuries the Jews were more than once driven out of Jerusalem but there were always a few who drifted back, settling on the slopes of Mount Zion and north of the Temple Mount. It was a small, vulnerable community but it hung on.

The centre of learning and Judaism had shifted from Jerusalem to richer and safer places throughout the medieval world, and yet, at least once a year, Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the prescribed pilgrimage. In these troubled times it was no longer possible to observe all three yearly pilgrimages, and somehow Succot had emerged as the only one to be widely observed, perhaps because the booths set up in observance of the law provided suitable accommodations for the pilgrims at a time when lodgings were no longer available in Jerusalem.

Forbidden - at times under pain of death - to enter the Temple Mount, the Jews turned to one of the few holy sites still open to them: the Mount of Olives. There the dove had found the branch it brought Noah to tell him the flood was over; there, according to a medieval tradition, the Divine presence had fled following the destruction of the Temple and there Judgment Day would be-

ased at the Dan gallery in the hotel.

FOR AMATEUR gardeners who love to care for plants but don't understand why they wither and die, the Council for a Beautiful Israel is holding a series of monthly lectures and workshops at the Israel Construction Centre in Ramat Aviv. For further details call Gila Harel, 03-235064, 03-227369.

E.H.

The making of a tradition

Michelle Mazel describes the medieval celebration of Hoshana Raba, marking the last day of Succot. Drawings by Elisha Eilon.

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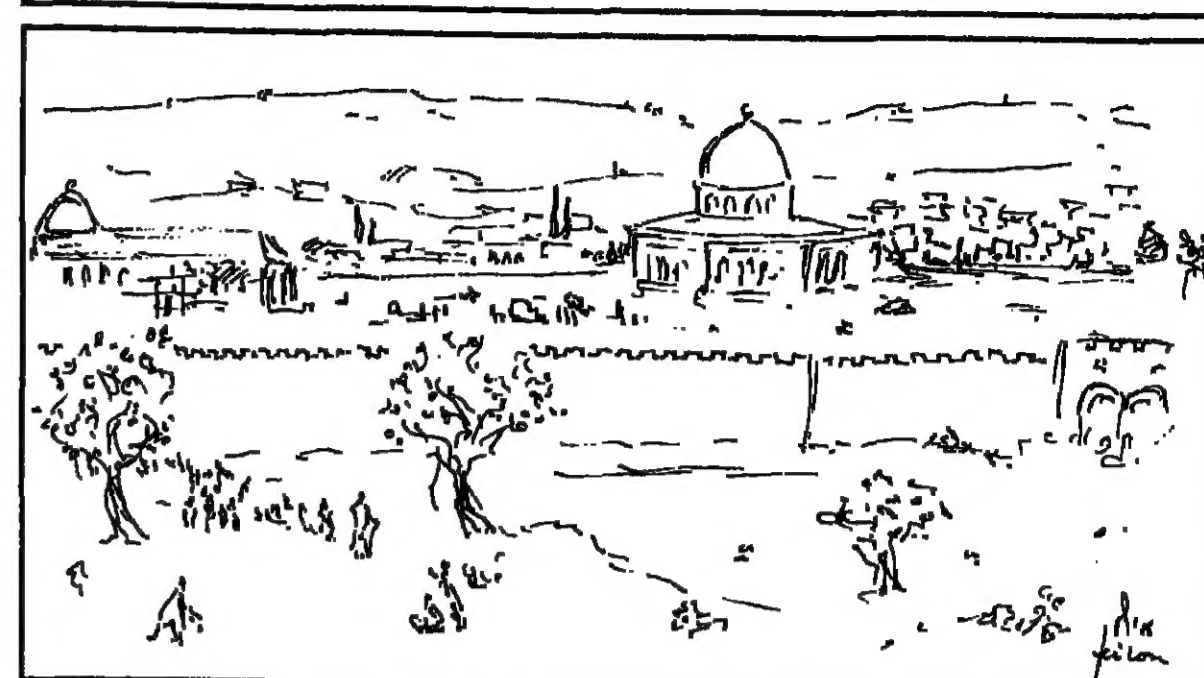
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On July 15, 1099, the Crusaders stormed the walls of Jerusalem. The massacre that followed remains unparalleled in the long and bloody history of the city. Muslims and Jews, for once united, were slaugh-

tered indiscriminately until the Temple Mount ran red with blood.

There was no Succot celebration on the Mount of Olives that year, or the next. Indeed, nothing was left of this peaceful and happy pilgrimage

but memories that soon turned into legends, and a few songs and prayers specially written for the great procession and found many centuries later in the giza of the Ibn Ezra synagogue of Cairo.

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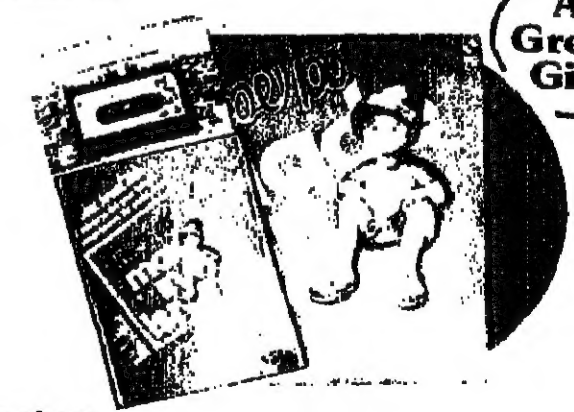
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